

***Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated.***

"Working Together as One" is a practice that involves sixth graders getting to know each other in a unique way. Three groups of students -- average learners, in class support students, and ESL students -- were involved in the practice. All of these children attended a sixth grade school which receives students from three separate K-5 elementary schools within the district. The aim of this practice is to bring children from the various tracks within the school together and help them find "common threads." All of the children were new to the school; most of the ESL students had the additional challenge of being new to both the country and the neighborhood.

These classes of students met approximately four times during a six week period. During the first meeting, students were paired, attempting to bring those of diverse backgrounds together. The students came with prepared questions to ask their partners. The three teachers involved provided refreshments and took pictures. This first meeting was a good ice breaker. During the week that followed, students worked independently in their own classrooms on the interview write up. Students wrote their first drafts, had writing conferences with their teachers, and did peer editing. During their next visit, students paired together once again. The students had the opportunity to ask additional questions and draw a joint picture. The objective of this class was to foster a positive relationship between children of different backgrounds. Back in their original classes, the second draft copies were revised and final copies were written by the children using the computer.

The next meeting consisted of the presentation and sharing of the interviews. Students came up to the podium with their partners. They pointed to their native countries on maps and globes. Children born in the United States shared their heritage by showing where their ancestors originated. Children orally presented their interviews, standing behind a speaker's podium. They had been instructed to speak slowly, clearly, and with expression, looking at their audience. Some children brought in additional visual aids such as family photographs to aid in understanding and make their speech more interesting.

After each presentation, one of the teachers photographed the students with their partners. Each child made two copies of his/her speech. One copy was placed in his writing portfolio and the other one was given to the partner as a souvenir of this special experience. After the photographs were developed, they were displayed on a bulletin board in the hallway of the school.

**Listed Objectives** Students will:

1. Develop a positive partner relationship with a student from a different country;
2. Learn to conduct an interview;
3. Gain confidence and poise in giving an oral presentation in front of both their peers and adults;
4. Widen their knowledge of geography and gain respect for traditions and cultures of others;
5. Work cooperatively with other children to complete a final product that both students are proud of;
6. Improve writing, proofreading, and editing skills;
7. Develop new friendships and remove barriers sometimes caused by different backgrounds;
8. Improve and expand on their basic computer skills;

**Innovation, Achievement, and Reproducibility**

Children of diverse backgrounds who do not often interact were brought together to find the common threads that exist among them. The dialogue between the new friends was sparkling and enlightening; students discovered, "My friend likes pizza, too", or admitted, "I never met a person from Pakistan before." Other similarities discovered during the interviews included common interests in sports, food, school subjects, talking on the telephone, and shopping.

Students who were limited in English proficiency were able to feel comfortable enough to speak in front of an audience of 45 people, including teachers, four supervisors, and 38 other students. Children who were academically gifted were able to act as leaders and motivated other students to express themselves fluently and articulately.

This activity may be reproduced at any academic level, at any school, and at no cost. While the photographs and refreshments, which did involve expenditures on the part of the teachers, enhance the program, they are not fundamental to its success, and, therefore, optional.

*Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the Core Curriculum Content and/or Workplace Readiness Standards addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard.*

Traditionally sixth grade students tend to form friendships with students much like themselves. Often they are apprehensive about meeting and joining with new children who are not like them. In this all sixth grade school students often remain friends with other students who attended elementary schools with them, rather than easily making new friends with students who attended other elementary schools in this district.

This practice addresses the need to encourage students to broaden their circle of friends. This was accomplished in the practice as the children met and discussed mutual likes and interests in this activity. The teachers involved gave the children an opportunity to come together and share their diverse backgrounds and cultures.

Throughout life, children and adults have to address a group of people either at work, or even at family gatherings. This practice provided students the opportunity to speak in front of an audience and gain confidence and poise. "Working Together as One" has a life goal of preparing children for success in a multicultural world, in their community and in their future workplace.

Three major areas of the **Core Curriculum Content Standards** are addressed by this activity. They are **Language Arts Literacy**, **Workplace Readiness**, and **World Languages**. This project involves four of the **Language Arts Literacy Content Standards**. The skills that were taught and reinforced included oral communication, reading, writing, and listening. Students participated by alternating the roles of speaker and listener. Students learned to give an actual real life interview. Students then retold and summarized their ideas. Teachers assisted them in using clear, concise, and organized language.

Drawing from the standards of **World Languages**, students demonstrated an ability to understand the new culture. They compared their own customs to the customs of their new friends. They explored similarities and differences among the various cultures of the students in these classes. The students even learned some new words from the various world languages represented by their new friends.

Students benefited in developing **Workplace Readiness Skills** by learning to allot sufficient time for interviewing, writing, editing, and re-interviewing their partners. They also set short and long term goals for completing their written and oral reports. During the course of several meetings, they learned to respect people of different races, religions, and ethnicity. Children worked cooperatively with others to accomplish an assigned task. Study skills already learned in language classes were reinforced and expanded during the course of this activity.

## **Core Curriculum Content**

### **Language Arts Literacy**

- 3.1 All students will speak for a variety of real purpose and audiences.
- 3.2 All students will listen actively in a variety of situations to obtain information from a variety of sources.
- 3.3 All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.
- 3.5 All students will view, understand, and use nontextual visual information.

### **World Languages**

- 7.2 All students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the interrelationships between language and culture for at least one world language in addition to English.

### **Workplace Readiness**

- 4.1 All students will demonstrate self-management skills

***Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met.***

The formal written reports, submitted by each of the students, were evaluated by the teachers for content, organization, grammar, spelling, punctuation and written expression. Students received a written grade based on a six point rubric. This rubric was carefully explained to the children prior to writing the final copy of their interview reports. A grade was also given on each student's oral presentation. A significant gain in proficiency was noted by the teachers and also observed by administrators who attended the various meetings. All of the students involved progressed in their ability to speak clearly and confidently in front of a large group of both their peer group and adults.

Children's computer skills were also assessed at the end of this practice. Again, a significant improvement was evident to those evaluating the children. Earlier in the school year the children had all taken a computer class during their science period. Students were taught basic keyboarding, centering, writing paragraphs, proper spacing, use of capitals, and methods of printing in a variety of ways. Students participating in the practice were graded on all of these computer skills on their final reports.

The three teachers involved observed that at each meeting of the groups a growing closeness and friendship began to evolve among the children. In between meetings, the students talked enthusiastically in their separate classrooms about their activities and often mentioned how they were looking forward to getting together again. Faculty members noticed that partners were often seen talking together in the hallways, at recess, and in the lunchroom. Students joined together at socials that were held periodically at the school during the early evening throughout the school year. Many students who participated in the practice joined a variety of after school clubs and also participated in intramural sports. Previously the ESL students had been hesitant to join these groups.